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THE INHUMAN CONDITION: RETHINKING ANTHROPOCENTRISM

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> We're in the world, not against it. It doesn't work to try to stand outside things and run them. . . . It just doesn't work, it goes against life. There is a way but you have to follow it. The world is, no matter how we think it ought to be. You have to be with it. You have to let it be.
>
> **Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Lathe of Heaven* (1971)**

"That's easy," said the physician with a friendly smile, "remove all humans, take them away, and there will be no more pollution, erosion, or climate change." Pondering the ecological problems of Santa Catarina, Brazil, he had concluded that earth's only salvation lies in human annihilation. This was not the first time I had encountered such misanthropy, but I had not expected it from a person who has dedicated his life to aiding his fellow human beings. Indeed, this doctor had just helped me regain my hearing—and yet, I could not make sense of his words.

The destruction caused by the Israeli air and ground offensive in Jabalia, 16 February 2025. No longer a human environment, much of Gaza has been both dehumanized and depopulated. © picture alliance / ASSOCIATED PRESS | Mohammad Abu Samra. All rights reserved.

One might "lose faith" in our species when looking at the ecological consequences of industrial society, but I think there is something deeply awry in the rejection of humanity and humanism at a time also characterized by intense dehumanization. While a selfish *Homo sapiens* makes for a compelling narrative, a brief look around the globe tells a different story: Human beings subject each other to maiming, murder, torture, and starvation, and the world we have built to ourselves has also brought about unprecedented evils, like abject poverty, overdose epidemics, and widespread mental illness.

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What is more, the environmental sacrifices made in the name of humanity do not benefit us humans as a species. Ecological destruction is ostensibly justified by human development, but waste and pollution return as microplastics, heavy metals, "forever chemicals," and other toxic substances permeating and poisoning our natural bodies. Rather than conquering nature, is it not more accurate to say that modernity, its many benefits notwithstanding, is turning the human condition into an increasingly inhuman one? And so I ask: If we actually and truly cared for humanity in all its diversity—if we cared for the welfare of *all* human beings, present and future—would we then not have to care also for the planet on which we all depend?

Toward an Ecological Anthropocentrism

The universe has no center: not the sun, not earth, and especially not ourselves. And yet, this universe is ours in the sense that it *environs us*; you, a human organism, are by definition at the center of your own environment. We have much to gain from trying to think objectively or to imagine the world from the viewpoints of deep time and nonhuman animals, but in the end the locus of our detached thought is the environed human organism we constitute. By thinking *through* the human self rather than beyond it, I suggest that we gain a better understanding of the ecological crisis, and that we will be better equipped to convince our fellow human animals why this crisis concerns us all. I therefore have a modest proposal: We must rethink one of the pillars of environmental ethics—the critique of anthropocentrism.[1] Put differently, I argue for an *ecological anthropocentrism*, by which I mean a stance that centers on our species morally and that embraces what it truly means to be human, which means to care also for the nonhuman world without which we would not exist.

> *Humanity is central not because of superiority or divine will, but because our common outlook is always rooted in a human body, its perceiving senses, and its conceiving brain.*

Instead of pitting the anthropocentric against the bio- or ecocentric, then, I propose a "concentric" approach, beginning but *not ending* with ourselves.[2] Like ripples on the water or the planets around the sun, its inner and outer circles have the same center. Humanity is central not because of superiority or divine will, but because our common outlook—regardless of culture—is always rooted in a human body, its perceiving senses, and its conceiving brain. Beginning with the human animal, ecological anthropocentrism therefore does not close upon itself but instead situates the human in relation to its environment. This is quite different from the idea of "Earth first, humanity second," as radical environmentalist Dave Foreman put it,[3] but it is not its reversal. If the human outlook acknowledges that we, too, are organisms, we can acknowledge that we depend on the ecological relations of our environment without bracketing or renouncing our humanity. The idea is not to say that anthropocentrism is good rather than bad, but that it can be good and even necessary if the "anthropos" is ecologically understood.

But why rethink the anthropocentric when so much scholarship builds upon rejecting it? While I agree with some of it, I suggest it is time for a critique of the critique. Firstly, because this criticism has not convinced people in general. Asking humans to decenter themselves and what matters to them is not realistic, and to ask them to care more for a natural world "out there" reinforces the idea that the human world is not a part of nature. As Jenny Price has argued in relation to mainstream US environmentalism, separating humans and "the environment" has generally left lower-income people from the US unconvinced and even instilled antagonism toward ecological questions. Despite suffering from environmental degradation, people across ethnic and political divides have come to loathe environmentalists for ignoring their plights.[4] So instead of talking about the environment as a foreign, fragile, nonhuman realm in need of saving from human interests, we have much to gain from communicating that ecological integrity *is* a human interest. Human ecology

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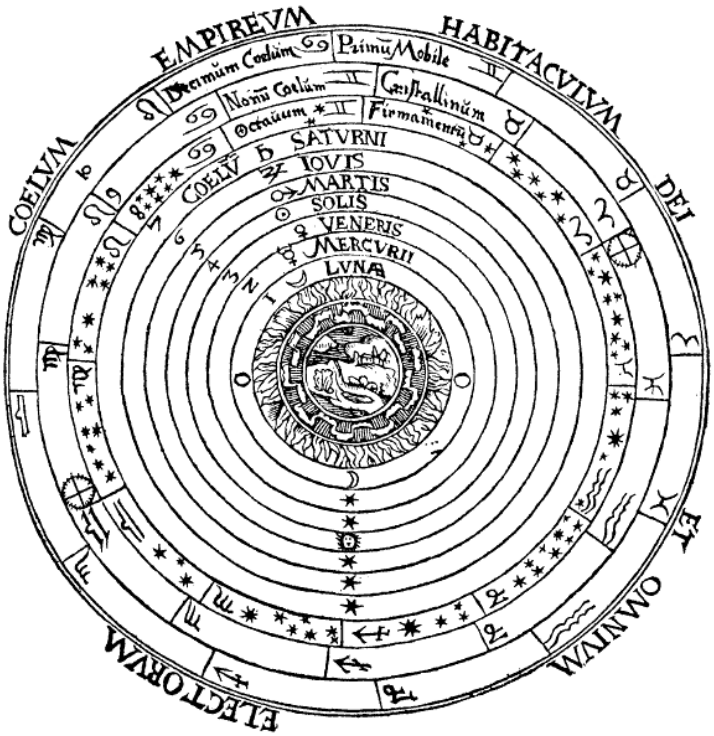
reminds us that people are a part of the environment, and that our care for earth cannot exclude the habitats of human beings.

A second reason to rethink the critique of anthropocentrism is that it risks obscuring that the ecological destruction is disproportionately destructive to the world's poor.[5] In his "third-world critique" of radical US environmentalism, Ramachandra Guha thus argues that "invoking the bogy of anthropocentrism is at best irrelevant and at worst a dangerous obfuscation." The concept can work as a reminder not to be hubristic, he admits, but the dichotomy of biocentrism and anthropocentrism fails to account for the social injustice integral to environmental destruction.[6] This is not a defense of "shallow" ecology but a call for an ecology that is radical, social, and human.

All critiques of anthropocentrism are not without merits, however, such as the recognition of human-specific biases. For example, the attempts to understand and combat yellow fever was long thwarted by what historian Gregg Mitman calls the anthropocentric assumption that it is a uniquely human disease.[7] In this case, however, the bias clearly did not benefit humanity, exemplifying how a genuine care for our species demands a mind open also to the spheres beyond the exclusively human.



Concentric circles around the earth in Peter Apian's *Cosmographia* (1539). While the geocentric worldview turned out to be false, it remains more true to our experience and everyday life than a heliocentric or relativist account: We still say that the sun goes up and down, just like it must appear to other organisms. By the same token, ecological anthropocentrism considers outer circles from the viewpoint of human experience. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain.

At the same time, human biases are part of what it means to be human. "We behold all things through the human head and cannot cut off this head," wrote Nietzsche when lamenting our inability to perceive the world beyond our senses, while also describing the remit of sense perception as a "prison"—an inescapable "concentric circle" drawn around us.[8] My point here is that we *can* escape this sensory confinement by considering the outer circles through abstraction, science, and imagination, but we must do so without fooling ourselves that we thereby escape the human outlook—from which we began and to which we must inevitably return. We may call this outlook biased, and we do well in trying to use our (human) brains to think through other perspectives, but the human condition dictates that our sensing, feeling, and thinking will always be expressions of our "all-too-human" organism. By the same token, dogs are cynocentric and horses hippocentric, in itself neither good nor bad but a recognition of what it means to be such an animal.[9]

But what about the normative dimension? In the bestseller *Eating Animals*, Jonathan Safran Foer defines anthropocentrism as "[t]he conviction that humans are the pinnacle, the appropriate yardstick by which to measure the lives of other animals, and the rightful owners of everything that lives."[10] While such supremacism literally could be called anthropocentric by virtue of placing us at the center of existence, my objection is that nothing in the word "centric" implies an imperialist attitude.[11] Otherwise "biocentric" would imply a ruthless favoring of life at the expense of abiotic nature, which would be just as self-defeating as an anthropocentrism undermining the very conditions of human life. We have simply come to conflate extreme egocentrism with

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anthropocentrism, but why should we accept Ayn Rand's view of humanity as inherently self-interested, rather than listen to Peter Kropotkin, who long ago demonstrated that collaboration is integral both to human and nonhuman evolution?[12]

> *We have simply come to conflate extreme egocentrism with anthropocentrism.*

While we humans are not superior in any objective sense, I believe that we nevertheless are justified in caring a bit more for individuals within our own species and those we find similar to ourselves. For example, mosquitos fill an important role in the ecosystem on which we depend, and as a species their existence can be anthropocentrically justified, but defending ourselves against individual mosquitos and their plasmodium parasites is in no way anti-ecological. We can and should debate our conduct toward other organisms, and this must be an ongoing discussion, but, unless we unsustainable "moderns" are to lecture Indigenous peoples about their sustainable lifestyles, we better start looking at what simultaneously causes harm to humans, nonhumans, and the planet: the increasing industrialization of human lives and habitats, their infrastructure, and their foodways for the sake of profit for the few.

Cities and their infrastructure provide shelter and opportunities for billions of people, but they are inhumane to those who for different reasons are excluded from their economy. Ecology means "the science of the home," and a human ecology can contribute to a world that can house all of us. Photo by Ev. Unsplash. Public domain.

In the end, the main problem of anti-anthropocentrism is that it lacks an established definition of that which is critiqued. As philosopher Laÿna Droz has shown in a multilingual study, most critics do not define the concept or do so in very different ways, but they nevertheless tend to consider it

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the cause behind the ecological crisis and ecological injustice. And so it rather serves as a scapegoat in lieu of a proper investigation of the causes.[13] Turning things around, I suggest that the ecological crisis stems from the negation of what is good for all human beings. Much of what is called anthropocentric is actually a veiled *Eurocentrism*: the explicit or implicit idea that humanity is epitomized by the white European man—or rather, the idealized idea thereof. Such false universalism makes for a false anthropocentrism, and it risks perpetuating the dangerous narrative that humanity as a species is wreaking havoc upon a nature to which it does not entirely belong.[14] Let us therefore be anthropocentric in a *true* sense by embracing human diversity and ecological dependence, so that we can care for the earth, its climate, and its biodiversity for the sake of all human organisms.

The Nature of the Ecological Crisis

If the narrative of humanity as a rogue species is incorrect and risks obscuring the socially unjust dynamics of the ecological crisis, how can we better understand humanity's role in this process? By recognizing its systemic nature. The majority of humans today depend on a global *economic* system, which in turn expands by siphoning energy and resources from the *ecological* system on which we ultimately depend. Any account of the crisis that fails to mention technological mediation therefore also fails to understand its dynamics, because science and technology literally supply us with the means and infrastructure by which this crisis unfolds.

> *Our everyday activities have increasingly come to have large-scale consequences—on Earth and on ourselves.*

For most of our existence, our relation to the earth and each other has remained remarkably stable, and the great changes often subsumed under the concept of the Anthropocene are perhaps better framed as a transformation of the *human condition*. In 1958, in the early days of the "Great Acceleration," Hannah Arendt thus argued that modernity has brought about new and destructive conditions for life. The fact that we live, grow old, and die is a universal and timeless aspect of the human condition, but, to Arendt, the changing form of our activities in relation to the earth also conditions us. Human action is not only earth-transforming, she argued, for we also act in order to survive and to be social, but our everyday activities have increasingly come to have large-scale consequences—on Earth *and* on ourselves.[15] As we change our environments and our interpretation of them, we also change the world in relation to which we act and react, thereby conditioning ourselves to different behaviors, activities, and patterns of action.

Rather than *in* the human and her volition, the problem therefore lies in her relation to the world environing her: that world in which she is the center. When we humans go about and live our everyday lives like any other organism, most (and increasingly more) of us do so in technologized, urban environments that demand energy and resources from far away. In short, humans today are being sustained by increasingly unsustainable environments—even when they actively diminish their personal impacts. It is as if ants were to find a way to grow their anthills exponentially larger at the detriment of their environs: No single ant would be to blame, but the colony as a whole—due to its new technique—would come to exceed the carrying capacity of the region, demanding further expansion to avoid collapse. Our individual choices matter, but their impact is void as long as we do not change the ways of human niche construction—of how our local habitats function in relation to the rest of the planet.

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Textile and plastic waste at Dandora dump site in Nairobi. Rather than being humanity's impact on the nonhuman world, this excretion of the global capitalist economy is detrimental to all organisms. © 2022 Kevin McElvaney. All rights reserved.

Today, I think we have reached a point that we could rightly call the *inhuman* condition: an altered state of human existence in which we are conditioned by a dehumanizing system and an environment that is increasingly unsuitable for life. We are compelled to take part in such a system—which others have called the "technosphere," the "megamachine," and the "Capitalocene"[16]—and though it rewards participation with convenience and safety, it also harms humans and their surroundings. It is hard to quantify the impact of the contemporary environment upon mental and physical health, but it is equally hard to deny that many of our social evils to different degrees result from the specific ways in which we are structuring our cities and economy. Suffering and sickness can be found even in the most "developed" of societies, while Gaza, the West Bank, Sudan, and Ukraine are extreme examples of how ecocide and environmental destruction do not preclude genocide and mass slaughter of children and civilians. As long as economic growth is not halted by it, an increasingly inhuman condition is not a failure of the global economy: Sponsored and made possible by multi-billion-dollar industries, socioecological harm is systemic and contributes to its expansion.

To grasp global and systemic problems, a planetary perspective is undeniably necessary, which explains the popularity of the *Blue Marble* photograph from 1972. Astronauts looking back at our only home sometimes experience the so-called "overview effect," and William Shatner, who played Captain Kirk in *Star Trek*, reflected on this after his first true space travel in 2021: "I played my part in popularising the idea that space was the final frontier. But I had to get to space to understand that Earth is, and will remain, our only home. And that we have been ravaging it, relentlessly, making it uninhabitable."[17] Shatner's awakening at age 90 is instructive, but we readers should question who "we" are in this last sentence, and whether we must leave Earth in order to recognize its importance. In the end, perhaps, it was actually a realization of how the frontier idea had blinded Shatner to how precious his human life on Earth really is.

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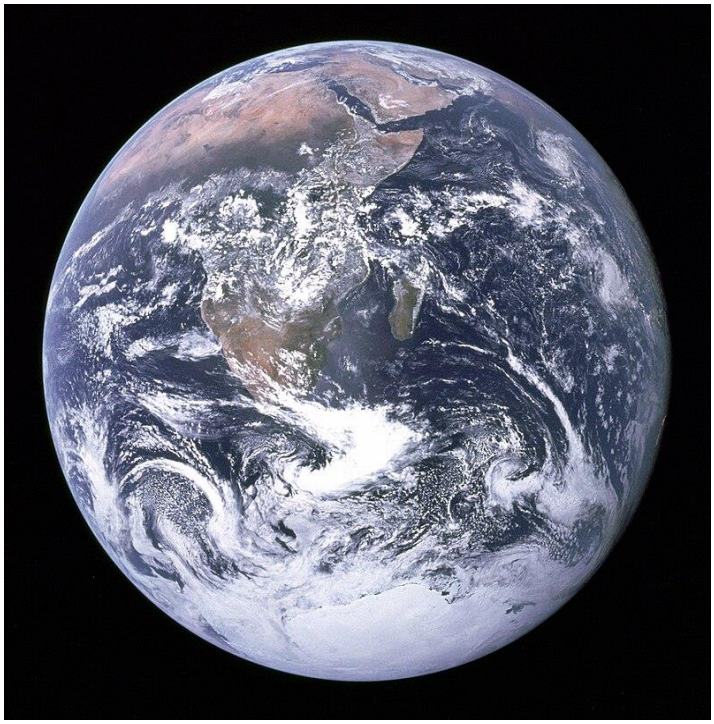
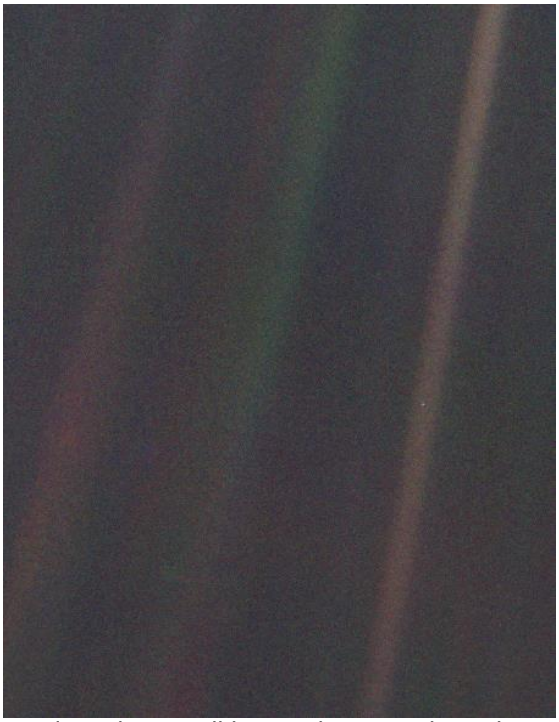

(Left) *The Blue Marble* (by Harrison Schmitt on 7 December 1972) reminds us that we all live on the same planet, but it also renders humans and other species invisible—and possibly insignificant. (Right) This is even more true in the *Pale Blue Dot* (by Carolyn Porco and Candy Hansen on 14 February 1990) photograph from *Voyager 1*, in which Earth itself is not even a full pixel in size. Public domain. Courtesy of NASA.

The astronomer Carl Sagan similarly argued that *The Pale Blue Dot* photograph, in which Earth is barely visible, is an even better challenge to what he called an anthropocentric "conceit."[18] If such a perspective is humbling, I nevertheless believe in the need for the humble perspective of ecological anthropocentrism. An overview perspective of our planet *can* be helpful, but it is clearly not enough. Whether witnessing or thinking it, we must nevertheless return to the actual Earth around us—the ground on which we stand.

Already before space travel, Arendt understood that the view of Earth from the outside was the Scientific Revolution's dream of attaining an Archimedean point, a God's-eye view, a view from nowhere rather than somewhere. Technological representation and detached, objective thinking are not the perspective of life or humanity, she realized, but the culmination of the scientific progress of occidental modernity. Science and technology should in no way be rejected, but it is important not to forget that, alongside goods, medicine, and conveniences, they have also given us evils such as pollution, intrusive surveillance, and weapons of mass destruction. The modern lifestyle and the crisis it generates cannot be sustained without technological means, which is why the increasingly dysfunctional human–environment relation can only be rectified by more humble and local techniques and knowledge.[19] At a time when billionaires argue that humanity's only future lies in using Promethean technologies to escape Earth, Arendt's grounded and ecologically humanistic philosophy instead prompts us to return to Earth in thought and action. She called our mental escape from humanity's terrestrial condition "world alienation" and believed that a physical escape was dangerous, dehumanizing, and ultimately impossible. When in 1963 asked whether the conquest of space would diminish the stature of humanity, Arendt therefore replied in the affirmative.[20]

Humanizing the Inhuman Condition

The escape from the human perspective has a dehumanizing effect, more so as humans are rendered as numbers and consumers and not persons, and a form of *humanization* is therefore

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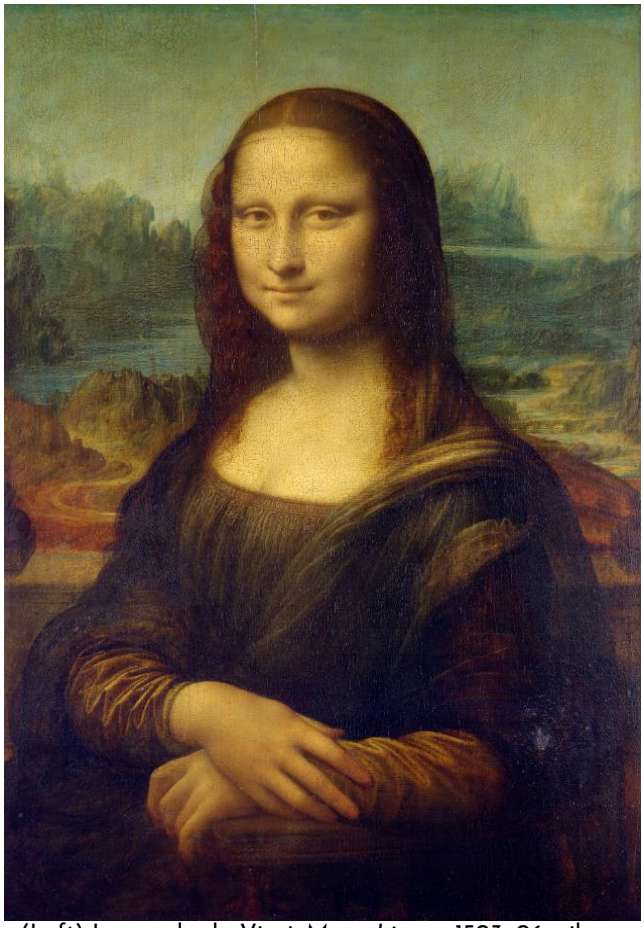
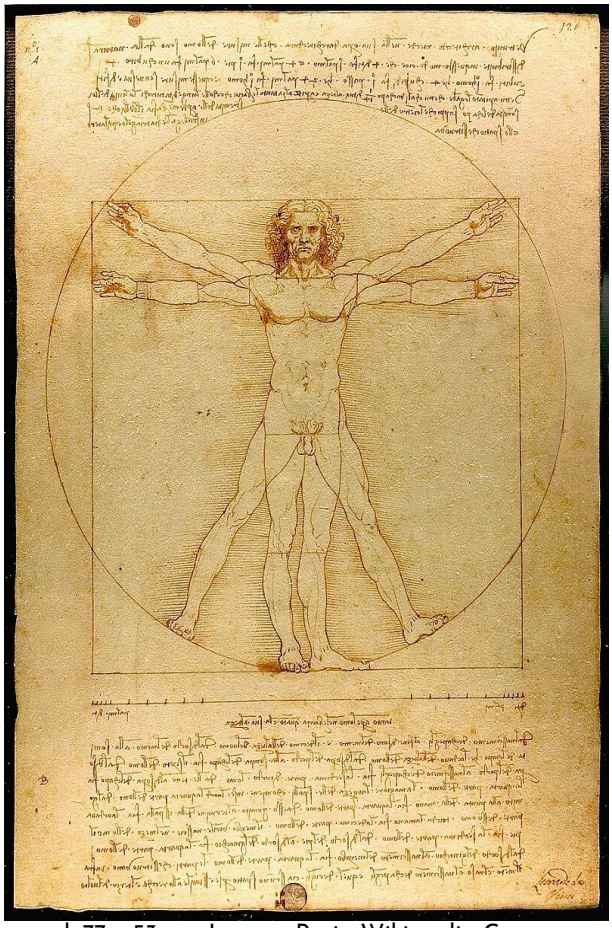
needed. What I call ecological anthropocentrism is such a humanization, because it constitutes a corrective to one of modernity's blind spots. In fact, the systemic critique of anthropocentrism has been integral to modernity since the Scientific Revolution. Francis Bacon (1561–1626), one of the key figures of early modernity, thus argued that humans must overcome anthropocentrism and other human "idols" or biases, a feat "from which must necessarily follow an improvement of their estate, and an increase of their power over nature." Only by overcoming the human outlook could one achieve that knowledge of material causes that Bacon famously equated with power.[21] He was not alone in rejecting the outlook of the human senses: Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) went so far as to consider it necessary to subject them to "violence" and even "rape" in order to refute the geocentric world picture, and René Descartes (1596–1650) separated not only mind and body but also self and world.[22] While human experience became foundational for the scientific method, the trailblazers of modernity also rendered it an obstacle to overcome through scientific inquiry. Since, contrary to Bacon's vision, humanity's estate or condition has become dehumanizing, it is now imperative to search for alternative, complementary, and truly anthropocentric perspectives beyond modernity.

While Renaissance humanism is partly to blame for the conceptual separation of "man" and "nature," late medieval humanists also provide us with a premodern example of how to conceive the world and humanity. Nicholas of Cusa (1401–64) conceived complementary ways of understanding the world, harmonizing the concrete and the abstract, while Erasmus of Rotterdam (c. 1466–1536) defended intuitive "folly" against the idea that scientific reason was the only right way to think.[23] This can also be understood visually: Think of Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) and his two most iconic depictions of humans from the threshold of modernity: the *Mona Lisa* (1503) and the *Vitruvian Man* (1490).





(Left) Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, c. 1503–06, oil on poplar panel, 77 x 53 cm, Louvre, Paris. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain. (Right) *The Vitruvian Man*, c. 1490, pen, brown ink, and watercolor over metalpoint on paper, 34.4. x 24.5 cm, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice. Wikimedia Commons.. Public domain.

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In *Mona Lisa* we see a particular human being with a name and face, portrayed as environed by a landscape like a real human being. What is more, the perspective implies an onlooker: you, the human being meeting her gaze. If *Mona Lisa* depicts an actual, ecologically interrelated human organism, the *Vitruvian Man* is the human in the abstract: a nameless, generic man without an environment, surrounded instead by abstract geometric figures and a description of the mathematical proportions of the human body. But both depictions stem from one and the same mind. Instead of severing science from art and life, like Bacon would later do, the humanist outlook exemplified by da Vinci lets the abstract and concrete modes of cognition coexist.

Similarly, to be ecologically anthropocentric does not mean to reject scientific classification, but to subordinate abstract thinking to life as it exists in concretely ecological human experience. The world of the senses is also the world of practical ethics, the world in which we act in relation to other beings. Hence the concrete outlook must remain foundational while the abstract must once again be made a tool for attaining a good life for all. To do so, we need to understand humanity in all its diversity, not in light of a Eurocentric ideal, and it is therefore essential to listen also to non-Western voices. Writing from the perspective of the colonized, Aimé Cesaire and Frantz Fanon criticized Western culture as "pseudo-humanist" while attacking the abstract, classifying mode of colonial thought, and from an Indigenous perspective, Brazilian intellectual Ailton Krenak of the Krenak People also rejects the current notion of "humanity" for being abstract and false; for uprooting people from local communities and ecologies.[24] The Indigenous scholar Célia Xakriabá of the Xacriabá People has likewise criticized this false humanity in the following words:

> What kind of human is this, who kills? What kind of civilization is this—anti-indigenous, anti-earth, anti-life? In truth, the only ones who know how to be human are the ones who know how to be jaguar, how to be water, how to be seed. Those who know how to be nature. Only those who know how to be beast know how to be human, how to be people.[25]

It is perfectly possible to embrace our humanity ecologically if we take seriously the insight that we, too, are organisms. Indigenous thought is often generalized as anti-anthropocentric, but I suggest that it rather tends to exemplify an ecologically anthropocentric outlook. It offers a "science of the concrete," as Claude Lévi-Strauss called it,[26] a knowledge system through which human societies have been maintained sustainably for time periods making that of industrial civilization pale in comparison. We cannot make our globalized cities function like local Indigenous societies, but we can and should learn from the manifold ways of thinking by which peoples around the world have sustained themselves for tens of thousands of years. These are distinctly human modes of thought, which though unique in their diversity offer non-modern outlooks rooted in the human organism, humbly extended into the spheres that environ them.

To be anthropocentric in a true and ecological sense means to understand the *anthropos* not as a universal idea, as "man" in the abstract, but as a human being in the flesh: embodied, embedded, environed, just like you who read these words are at this very moment. We are organisms that stand in relation to that which environs us—and, importantly, this environment is not a reversal of humanity but includes it. Of nature, we humans nevertheless *are* exceptional, which is attested not only by our societies' consequences upon the nonhuman world but also by their impact on the lives of human organisms. The extreme degree to which our contemporary societies dedicate energy to infighting, within and between themselves, illustrate the lack of a common purpose for human civilizations. Aristotle long ago conceived such a goal for human science and societies, naming it *eudaimonia*, best translated as human flourishing,[27] and this is not less realistic than the naïve pursuit of infinite growth and expansion. Universals are abstract, and as such they risk distorting reality, which is why we need a new and more diverse notion of humanity, its needs, and its wants. Rightly conceived, such human interests are not adverse to ecology, for it lies in our interest to protect the conditions of life in the Holocene if we truly care for ourselves and each other.[28]

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> *We need a new and more diverse notion of humanity, its needs, and its wants.*

To humanize the inhuman condition, however, I believe that we must begin, not with grand ideas and abstract theories, but with ourselves and our concrete human experience. Beginning with what we have in common as human animals, we will also be able to discuss the importance of ecology beyond divides of politics and class. As I left the clinic of the misanthropic physician, I remained silent for a long time. So baffled by his words that I had nothing to say, I instead delighted in having regained my hearing, enjoying the particular frequencies perceivable by my human ears. And so I invite you to experience the world around you, whether urban or "wild," not as a place beyond your humanity but as a world to cherish and care for through the outlook of the human organism. Whenever you do that and whatever you call it, you are taking the first step toward what I call ecological anthropocentrism.

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Acknowledgements

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Notes

[1] On the centrality of this critique, see Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III, "Ethics and Environmental Ethics," in *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*, ed. Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III (Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 8–9; Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, "Ethics," in *Keywords for Environmental Studies*, ed. Joni Adamson, William A. Gleason, and David N. Pellow (New York University Press, 2016).

[2] Although I derive this idea of concentrism from organicism and ecology, it has analogues in some Confucian philosophy. Tu Weiming calls this "anthropocosmic" instead of anthropocentric, but I prefer to retain the "centrism" to emphasize the origin in the human self. Tu Weiming, "Family, Nation, and the World: The Global Ethic as a Modern Confusian Quest," *Social Semiotics* 8, no. 2/3 (1988): 283–95, pp. 294–5. See also Justin Tiwald, "Confucian Cosmopolitanism: Relationships as a Basis for Obligations Toward Non-Citizens," *The Challenges of Globalization*, 18 November 2021, https://uschinadialogue.georgetown.edu/responses/confucian-cosmopolitanism-relationships-as-a-basis-for-obligations-toward-non-citizens/.

[3] Dave Foreman, Earth First Statement of Principles and Membership Brochure" (September 1980), Environment & Society Portal, Multimedia Library, http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6810.

[4] Jenny Price, *Stop Saving the Planet!: An Environmentalist Manifesto* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2021), 9–29, 55–61.

[5] E.g., Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Princeton University Press, 2011).

[6] Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique," *Environmental Ethics* 11, no. 1 (1989): 73–4, quote from p. 74. A similar point has been made from another perspective in Tim Hayward, "Anthropocentrism: A Misunderstood Problem," *Environmental Values* 6, no. 1 (1997): 49–63, https://doi.org/10.3197/096327197776679185.

[7] Gregg Mitman, "A Virus in the Forest: Yellow Fever, West Africa, and the Remaking of Alliances Among Living Things, 1900–1950," in *Rural Disease Knowledge: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Matheus Alves Duarte Da Silva and Christos Lynteris (Routledge, 2025).

[8] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 15–16, quote from p. 15; Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Dawn of Day* (Dover Publications, 2007), 122–3 (aphorism 117), quote from p. 122.

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[9] For a now classic philosophical argument behind this statement, see Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?," *The Philosophical Review* 83, no. 4 (1974): 435–50, https://doi.org/10.2307/2183914.

[10] Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals* (Back Bay Books, 2009), 46.

[11] As Tim Hayward has argued, anthropocentrism is often conflated with speciesism and human chauvinism, but it implies neither by necessity. Tim Hayward, "Anthropocentrism: A Misunderstood Problem," *Environmental Values* 6, no. 1 (1997): 49–63, https://doi.org/10.3197/096327197776679185.

[12] For Ayn Rand's view on human nature, see "The Objectivist Ethics," in *The Virtue of Selfishness: A New Concept of Egoism* (Signet, 1964). For Kropotkin, who expanded on Darwin's framework by naturalizing collaboration in both humans and animals, see his *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (Dover Publications, 2021).

[13] Laÿna Droz, "Anthropocentrism as the Scapegoat of the Environmental Crisis: A Review." *Ethics in Science and Environmental Politics* 22 (2022): 25–49, https://doi.org/10.3354/esep00200.

[14] On the ecological and social danger of this monolithic conception of humanity, see Malcom Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean World* (Polity Press, 2022): 3–8; Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg, "The Geology of Mankind? A Critique of the Anthropocene Narrative," *The Anthropocene Review* 1, no. 1 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1177/2053019613516291.

[15] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (The University of Chicago Press, 2018). On Arendt's relevance for the Anthropocene discussion, see Oliver Belcher and Jeremy J. Schmidt, "Being Earthbound: Arendt, Process and Alienation in the Anthropocene," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 39, no. 1, 103–20, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775820953855.

[16] E.g., Peter Haff, "Humans and Technology in the Anthropocene: Six Rules," *The Anthropocene Review* 1, no. 2 (2014): 126–36; Lewis Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine*, vol. 2, *The Pentagon of Power* (Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1970); Jason Moore, introduction to *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, edited by Jason Moore (PM Press, 2016).

[17] William Shatner, "My Trip to Space Made me Realise We Have Only One Earth—It Must Live Long and Prosper," *The Guardian*, 7 December 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/dec/07/william-shatner-earth-must-live-long-and-prosper-aoe.

[18] Carl Sagan, *Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space* (Ballantine Books, 1997), 18.

[19] For similar arguments, see Lewis Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine*, vol. 2, *The Pentagon of Power* (Harcourt, Brace and World, 1970); E. F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered* (Vintage, 2011); Adrián Almazán, "Técnicas humildes para el Siglo de la Gran Prueba," in *Humanidades ecológicas: Hacia un humanismo bioesférico*, ed. J. Albelda, F. Arribas-Herguedas, and C. Madorrán (Tirant Lo Blanch, 2023).

[20] Hannah Arendt, "Has Man's Conquest of Space Increased or Diminished His Stature?," in *The Great Ideas Today* (William Benton, 1963); Hannah Arendt, *The Condition of Man*, 1–6. For her emphasis on the concrete perspective of the human body as primary, see her *The Life of the Mind* (Harcourt Inc., 1978).

[21] Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, ed. by Joseph Devey, vol. 1, *Science* (P. F. Collier and Son, 1901): 5–9, 20–21, 289–90, quote from p. 290. While all four biases can be considered human, it is the "idol of the tribe" that critiques the human way of experiencing the world.

[22] Galileo Galilei, *Dialogue on the Great World Systems*, the Salusbury translation, rev. Giorgio de Santillana (University of Chicago Press, 1957), 340–41, quotes from p. 341; René Descartes, *Meditations of First Philosophy / Meditationes de prima philosophia*, ed. and trans. George Heffernan (University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), e.g., paragraph 12 in the first meditation and 2–3 in the second. Descartes was not a solipsist, and, after questioning everything but his rational thinking, he sought to build a more rational understanding of the world beyond mind—but the reality of this world remained questionable from the premise that existence begins in thought. On Descartes, see also Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception and Its Philosophical Consequences," trans. James M. Edie, in *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics* (Northwestern University Press, 1964): 22–5. Cf. Hartmut Rosa, *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World* (Polity Press, 2019), 38.

[23] For Nicholas of Cusa's distinction, see Jonna Bornemark, *Det omätbaras renässans: En uppgörelse med pedanternas herravälde* (Volante, 2018): 34–51; and Nicholas of Cusa, *On Surmises*, in *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Nicholas of Cusa*, trans. Jasper Hopkins, vol. 1 (The Arthur J. Banning Press, 2001), 177–80. For Erasmus of Rotterdam, see *Praise of Folly*, trans. Betty Radice (Penguin, 1993), 53. A work of satire, Erasmus's defense of "folly" is nevertheless earnest and should be understood in relation to St. Paul's words in 1 Cor, 1:17–25. See also Anthony Levi's foreword to *Praise of Folly*.

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[24] Aimé Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (Monthly Review Press, 1972); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (Penguin Books); Ailton Krenak, *Life Is Not Useful*, trans. Jamille Pinheiro Dias and Alex Brostoff (Polity, 2023); Ailton Krenak, *Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo* (Companhia das Letras, 2019).

[25] Célia Xacriabá, "Só sabe ser humano quem sabe ser natureza," in *Oboré: Quando a terra fala*, edited by Martha Batista de Lima (Tumiak Produções, Instituto Arapoty, 2022), 25. My translation. The original reads: "Que ser humano é esse, que mate? Que civilização é essa, anti-indígena, antiterra, antivida? Na verdade, para ser humano, só sabe ser humano aquele que sabe ser onça, ser água, saber ser semente. Aquele/aquela que sabe ser natureza. Somente sabe ser humano, somente sabe ser gente, aquele que sabe ser bicho."

[26] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Wild Thought*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman and John Leavitt (The University of Chicago Press, 2021): 1–40.

[27] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, with a translation by H. Rackham (Harvard University Press, 1961), chapters 1 and 2. While Aristotle wrote about Athenian society and its free men, we must think of our global society and all human beings.

[28] For a suggestion on how to connect human self-actualization with ecology, see Jonatan Palmblad, "Instrumentalidad y personalidad ecológica: ¿Con qué finalidad?," *Papeles de Relaciones Ecosociales y Cambio Global* 171 (2025): 111–22.

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